

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ARTICLE ON INDONESIAN INTENTIONS TOWARDS
PORTUGUESE TIMOR

1. SUMMARY - FOL IS TEXT OF ARTICLE BY PETER HASTINGS,
EXPERIENCED AND WELL-BRIEFED AUSTRALIAN JOURNALIST, ON
SITUATION IN PORTUGUESE TIMOR, WHICH APPEARED IN
SYDNEY MORNING HERALD FEB. 21. END SUMMARY

2. QTE. THERE ARE MOUNTING AND UNWELCOME INDICATIONS -
EVIDENCE BY INCREASED FOREIGN PRESS AWARENESS, IN LETTERS
ONE RECEIVES FROM INTERESTED OBSERVERS AND BY INEVITABLE
LEAKS IN JAKARTA ITSELF - THAT THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT IS
SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING TAKING OUT PORTUGUESE TIMOR IN A
MILITARY OPERATION IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE.

3. QTE. THERE HAVE BEEN KKO (MARINE CORPS) EXERCISES IN
JAVA, INCREASED BORDER ACTIVITY IN TIMOR AND A GENERAL UP-
GRADING OF MILITARY PREPAREDNESS. RUMOURS POINT TO AN AM-
PHIBIOUS OPERATION AGAINST DILI AND THE ALL-IMPORTANT 707
JET STRIP AT BAUCAU.

4. QTE. ONE HOPES THERE WILL BE A LAST MINUTE SWITCH, BUT
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PAGE 02 CANBER 01158 210825Z

IF JAKARTA TAKES THE PLUNGE WILL ANYBODY GREATLY CARE IN

AUSTRALIA? WILL INDONESIA'S HARD-WON FRIENDS IN ASEAN - SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA, THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES - BE DISTURBED? WILL BUDDING, IF UNCERTAIN, REGIONAL STATES LIKE PAPUA NEW GUINEA BE AFFECTED?

5. QTE. IN ONE WAY AND ANOTHER THE ANSWER IS YES. NOT FOR OLD-FASHIONED STRATEGIC REASONS - IN THAT SENSE TIMOR CEASED TO BE IMPORTANT TO AUSTRALIA TWO DECADES AND MORE AGO - BUT FOR NEW STRATEGIC REASONS WHICH PRIMARILY HAVE TO DO WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT OF THE NEW-ORDER INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT, REGIONAL EQUILIBRIUM, WHICH ITS PROPOSED ACTION WOULD BADLY FRACTURE.

6. QTE. NOT A SINGLE COUNTRY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WOULD HAVE RAISED MORE THAN A PASSING YAWN IF JAKARTA HAD MANAGED TO TAKE OVER EAST TIMOR BY QTE. ACCLAMATION END QTE - THAT IS BY A QUIET, RAPID PROCESS OF SUBVERSION. DESPITE A SOMEWHAT MECHANICAL RIDER ABOUT SELF-DETERMINATION PROCESSES, THIS IN EFFECT IS WHAT MR. WHITLAM ASSENTED TO LAST YEAR IN HIS TALKS WITH PRESIDENT SOEHARTO, A POINT SHARPLY PICKED UP IN A BBC PROGRAM LAST WEEK.

7. QTE. BUT SOMEHOW JAKARTA MISCALCULATED THE SITUATION. PORTUGUESE TIMOR DIDN'T SUCCUMB TO PROPAGANDA BROADCASTS AND INFILTRATION TACTICS. IT DIDN'T FALL LIKE A RIPE APPLE. JAKARTA ALSO MISCALCULATED THE MOOD OF PORTUGAL, BELIEVING IT SO DISTRACTED BY ITS INTERNAL POLITICS THAT IT WOULD WELCOME A SURREPTITIOUS INDONESIAN TAKEOVER OF ITS MILLSTONE PROVINCE.

8. QTE. SO FAR LISBON HAS GIVEN NO REAL INDICATION OF WHAT IT INTENDS TO DO WITH TIMOR. NOR WILL IT KNOW UNTIL PORTUGAL'S ELECTIONS AT THE END OF APRIL REVEAL WHAT SORT OF GOVERNMENT IT WILL HAVE AND HOW FAR LEFT IT WILL BE IN SYMPATHY. IT IS JAKARTA'S FEARS OF AN EXTREME LEFT PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT GRANTING TIMOR PREMATURE INDEPENDENCE, AND THE INCALCULABLE EFFECTS OF THAT, WHICH IS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR TODAY'S MARINE CORPS EXERCISES.

9. QTE. JAKARTA'S MISCALCULATIONS HAVE TO SOME EXTENT BEEN UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 CANBER 01158 210825Z

THOSE OF MR. WHITLAM, WHO HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE SITUATION WITH HIS POSITIVE MANIA FOR GIVING AWAY THINGS THAT ARE NOT AUSTRALIA'S TO GIVE AWAY, SUBSEQUENTLY HOPING THAT THE RESULTANT MESS CAN BE SWEEPED UNDER THE CARPET. THIS IS ONE MESS THAT CAN'T BE.

10. QTE. THE DAY INDONESIAN PARATROOPS LAND IN BAUCAU AND DILI, ON WHATEVER UNCONVINCING PRETEXT JAKARTA DREDGES UP,

THE FAT WILL BE IN THE REGIONAL FIRE. FIRST, THE EVENT WILL BE OBSERVED BY NEWSMEN AND TV CAMERAS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD; SURELY JAKARTA DOESN'T BELIEVE THAT IT CAN MOVE TROOPS, AIRCRAFT AND EQUIPMENT IN SUCH AN OPERATION UNANTICIPATED AND UNOBSERVED?

11. QTE. SECOND, PORTUGAL WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY APPEAL TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL; EVEN AS LISBON WERE SECRETLY DELIGHTED AT GETTING RID OF AN UNWANTED COLONY BY SUCH UNCONVENTIONAL MEANS AS INVASION, NO COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, NOT EVEN DIVIDED, DISTRACTED PORTUGAL, COULD ALLOW AN ATTACK ON ITS SOVEREIGNTY TO GO UNCHALLENGED.

12. QTE. THIRD, ANY SHOW OF TIMORESE RESISTANCE - AND THERE WILL BE PLENTY - WILL RIVET UN AND WORLD ATTENTION ON THE INDONESIANS.

13. QTE. ONCE THE UN MACHINERY IS IN MOTION, NATIONS NEAR AND FAR, BIG AND SMALL, WILL BECOME INVOLVED. THEY WILL BE COMPELLED TO TAKE ATTITUDES. AMONG THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT WILL BE CHINA AND RUSSIA, PORTUGAL'S NEW FRIENDS, WHICH WOULD IMMEDIATELY START DOING THE VERY THING THAT JAKARTA FEARS MOST - NAMELY MEDDLER.

14. QTE. AND IF BIG GLOBAL POWERS START TO ADOPT ATTITUDES, WHAT ABOUT REGIONAL POWERS LIKE AUSTRALIA? ON THE INTERNAL FRONT THE GROWING FEROCITY OF LIBERAL-LABOR POLITICS, ANTI-INDONESIAN FEELINGS AMONG A GROWING NUMBER OF ACADEMICS, JOURNALISTS AND POLITICIANS OVER POLITICAL DETAINEES, AND THE FEELINGS OF MANY THAT AID SHOULD BE CUT BACK, ALMOST CERTAINLY MEANS THAT A MILITARY TAKEOVER OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR WILL BECOME A DOMESTIC POLITICAL ISSUE.

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PAGE 04 CANBER 01158 210825Z

QTM QTE. EXTERNALLY, THE POSITION WILL BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT, COULD AUSTRALIA, OR ANY OTHER REGIONAL COUNTRY FOR THAT MATTER, GET UP IN THE UN AND SELECTIVELY CONDONE MILITARY AGGRESSION - SAYING, IN EFFECT, THAT WHILE IT IS WRONG FOR ISRAEL TO ATTACK EGYPT, IT IS RIGHT FOR INDONESIA TO ATTACK PORTUGAL? IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE. AUSTRALIA WILL HAVE TO TAKE AN ATTITUDE AND THERE IS ONLY ONE IT CAN TAKE.

16. QTE. BUT THE WORST EFFECT WILL BE ON REGIONAL RELATIONS. THESE ARE NOT SO STRONG THAT THEY CAN REMAIN UNSCARRED BY AN INDONESIAN MILITARY STRIKE, NO MATTER HOW NECESSARY THE STRIKE MAY SEEM IN JAKARTA OR HOW WELL THE REASONS FOR IT ARE UNDERSTOOD IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

17. QTE. A MILITARY OPERATION MUST SHAKE THE NEWLY ACQUIRED TRUST OF NEAR NEIGHBOURS (ESPECIALLY THOSE LIKE SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA AND PERHAPS PAPUA NEW GUINEA, WHICH HAVE COMMON BORDERS WITH INDONESIA) THAT JAKARTA IN PURSUIT OF ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS WILL HAVE A CAREFUL REGARD FOR THOSE OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION.

18. QTE. IN SHORT, IF INDONESIA DOES GO FOR A MILITARY SOLUTION IN TIMOR, IT WILL UNDO THE GROWING SENSE OF REGIONAL TRUST AND STABILITY (EG, ASEAN, AND THE BORDER AGREEMENTS WITH PAPUA NEW GUINEA) TO WHICH, AS THE BIGGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT POWER IN THE AREA, IT HAS CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH.

QOM QTE. NONE OF THIS IS TO DENY INDONESIA'S VERY REAL FEARS THAT AN INDEPENDENT TIMOR WILL ACT AS A TROJAN HORSE FOR COMMUNIST INTERFERENCE AND AS A POSSIBLE INCENTIVE TO EAST INDONESIAN SEPARATISTS. EVEN SO THERE ARE MORE WAYS THAN ONE OF VIRTUALLY CONTROLLING AN INDEPENDENT EAST TIMOR INCLUDING THAT OF A FORMALIZED QTE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP. END QTE.

20. QTE. ONE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THESE ARGUMENTS ARE BEING THOROUGHLY THRASHED OUT IN JAKARTA, AND THAT IN THE END PRESIDENT SOEHARTO WILL NOT COME DOWN ON THE SIDE OF THE INTERVENTIONISTS WHO HAVE ALWAYS ARGUED THAT A MILITARY UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 CANBER 01158 210825Z

ACTION WOULD ONLY MAKE INDONESIA UNPOPULAR IN THE WORLD FOR FIVE YEARS AT MOST.

21. QTE. THEY CITE INDIA AND GOA AS AN EXAMPLE. IT'S A BAD EXAMPLE AND IF ACTED UPON WILL PROVE NOTHING BEYOND THE FACT THAT IN PERCEPTION AND PURSUIT OF VITAL INTERESTS INDONESIA'S GOVERNMENT LACKS THE INTELLECTUAL FLEXIBILITY TO FIND ALTERNATIVES TO STICKY SECURITY PROBLEMS OTHER THAN THOSE OF FORCE MAJEURE. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT'S A LESSON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WILL TAKE VERY MUCH TO HEART. END QTE. HARROP

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